



IL CENACOLO

ITALIAN CULTURAL CLUB

Founded in 1928

Regular Thursday Meetings, Noon to 2:00 P.M.
San Francisco Italian Athletic Club
1630 Stockton Street (3rd floor), San Francisco, CA 94133

www.ilcenacolosf.org

"Il Cenacolo is an organization that preserves, enhances and encourages all aspects of Italian arts, language and culture and recognizes the unique contribution of Italian heritage that is intertwined in the history and life of the San Francisco Bay Area."

JANUARY 2018

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

The Challenge of Producing a Nice Pinot Noir from the Edge of the Continent
David Cobb, Cenacolista, and Ross Cobb

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2018

Laughter from the Hip: How Early Jazz Developed
Mike Greensill, Cenacolista

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2018

The Meaning of La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona
Alex Kugushev, Cenacolista

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2018

Fez, Where the Middle Ages Still Live
Kayvan Tabari, Cenacolista

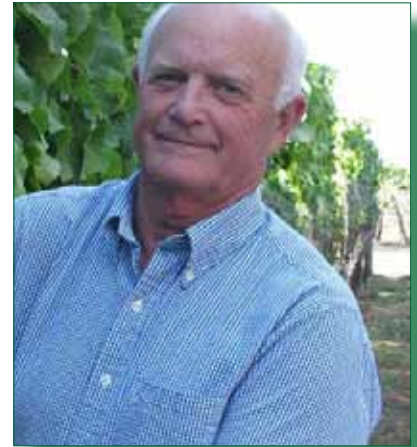
This month's programs arranged by David Cobb.

PROGRAM PROFILES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2018

The Challenge of Producing a Nice Pinot Noir from the Edge of the Continent
by David Cobb, Cenacolista, and Ross Cobb

David has been growing pinot noir grapes in far western Sonoma county since 1989. He was one of the first growers to realize that the sunny coastal ridges above the sea and fog were highly suitable for that variety. David almost got it right, but in most years marginal growing conditions there allow only a pitifully small harvest of fruit, often insufficient even to cover farming costs, let alone support a retirement. This is where son Ross came in. His wines, produced from pinot noir grapes from the Cobb's Coastland Vineyard in Occidental and from several other coastal farmers are now among the best pinot noirs in North America. David and Ross will discuss the coastal conditions so challenging to a grape grower, and why the resulting wines are worth it. Several examples of their wines will be tasted.



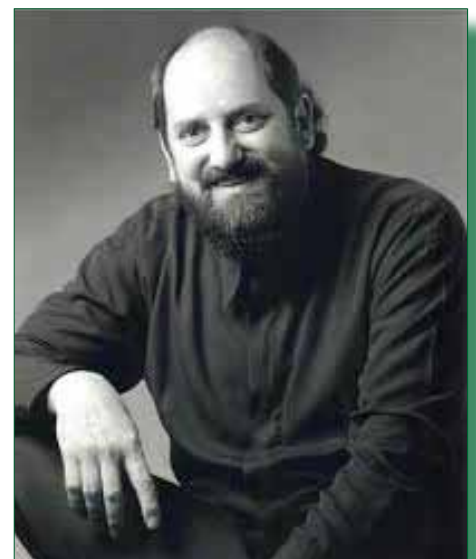
David and his wife live in Belvedere, California, where they are both attempting to retire from the business worlds of their earlier years. Although Bunny is happily successful in that endeavor, David still struggles with self-inflicted and diverse projects. Those and Thursday lunches keep him off the streets and out of the bars!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2018

Laughter from the Hip: How Early Jazz Developed
Mike Greensill, Cenacolista

Jazz musicians are known for their acerbic wit and twisted sense of humor. In "Laughter from the Hip" Mike will share anecdotes and stories from jazz musicians, ancient and modern, famous and not so famous, along with playing examples of their signature tunes.

In his dotage, Mike reports that he is appreciating the art of the great tune writers more and more, usually much more than his attempts to improvise over them. He is now recording solo lots of his favorite songs, all happening in his living room in St. Helena, accompanied by his beloved Yamaha C7 keyboard.



THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2018

The Meaning of La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona

Alex Kugushev, Cenacolista

The basilica La Sagrada Familia is a phenomenon unique in contemporary Western civilization. Churches in the rest of Western Europe stand empty these days, but the citizens of Barcelona have countered this trend and are creating a monument for the ages and an expression of positive, optimistic Catholicism. Alex will describe, in a richly illustrated presentation, the beauty we see now, its meaning and symbolism, and how it came to be--all exemplifying the genius of Gaudí and the spirit of Barcelona.

Alex is a journalist and educational publisher. Born in France, schooled in Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Argentina, he is now a naturalized American. He taught college and spent forty years publishing college textbooks. He co-founded CyberGnostics, Inc., publishing exclusively on the Internet. He has written four books, traveled to some 80 countries and speaks seven languages. He recently published a book *We're 34th in Education* detailing the American public school system.

One-minute video of the simulated completion of the basilica according to Gaudí's design:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcDmloG3tXU>



THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2018

Fez, Where the Middle Ages Still Live

Kayvan Tabari, Cenacolista

Keyvan visited Morocco in the fall of 2016. He will give us a profusely illustrated talk about Fez, the country's most important and oldest city. Fez has been Morocco's capital most of the time since 1228 and has profoundly influenced its religious, intellectual and artistic life. It is also one of the oldest well-preserved cities in the world, with the largest market of the medieval Islamic world still mostly intact. The vast Old Medina of many souqs, crisscrossed by thousands of narrow alleys and cramped with people, donkeys, motorcycles and pushcarts is the largest pedestrianized urban space ever created. There craftsmen still make by hand goods not found elsewhere. Keyvan will also present venerable libraries and religious schools (madrasas). Among them al-Qarawiyyin, where in medieval times the great Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, and the great Arab historian, Ibn Khaldun, contributed to the expansion of human knowledge. You will also glimpse remnants of the Jewish people who have left their marks in synagogues and houses.

Keyvan has a deep interest in the culture and history of the people of the Middle East. He has traveled extensively throughout the area and speaks from first-hand knowledge as a student, as a traveler and as an attentive observer. Keyvan holds a PhD from Columbia University in International Relations and Law and has practiced law in San Francisco for 30 years. He has written several articles on Morocco (see tabarionline.com).



Dear Cenacolisti,

Happy New Year! May 2018 bring you and yours joy, success and good health. I hope that you had a great Christmas and enjoyed the holidays.

As usual, this bulletin contains announcements that I hope you will find useful, informative and interesting.

PEOPLE—

Our most senior member, Rocco Gulli, passed away recently. He will be fondly remembered and we offer our condolences to his wife, Sondra, and to all of his family. May his soul rest in peace. His son, Christopher, continues on as a member of Il Cenacolo.

Just a couple of reminders:

—As always, I encourage you to join one of our committees. These committees are key to our operations and you can make a difference by joining one. Please take the time now to contact one of the team chairmen (they are listed after this message) and get involved!

—We are in the process of contacting club members to ask about their willingness to serve on the Board of Directors or one of our committees starting July 1, 2018. This will be your chance to become involved. I hope that you will take this opportunity to contribute.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS—

Thanks to Jim Boitano for organizing the December programs. The programs were well received by all—providing us with an in-person account of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the journey and insight of an immigrant from Calabria. Well done!

This bulletin highlights our January programs. Please support your Club by attending as many of the Thursday luncheons as possible. Your attendance is much appreciated and I know that you will enjoy the outstanding programs and the camaraderie of your fellow Cenacolisti.

Our Holiday Gala was held on December 1 at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club. It was enjoyed by the 100 guests in attendance. Our Woman of the Year was Anna Maria Pierini,

the executive director of Italian Community Services. Several community leaders, including the Consul General of Italy, the Honorable Lorenzo Ortona, and the president of Italian Community Services, Don Paracchini, were there to acknowledge the tremendous service that Anna Maria has provided to the community over the last 20 years. This year's gala committee was headed by Ron Derenzi, who together with his team of Eugene Lanzone, West Whittaker and Karen Guglielmoni provided us with a great evening.

As in the past, the Holiday Gala was funded in part by a bequest from Tony Barbieri. At the excellent suggestion of John Shook, I asked several longtime members to provide more information about Tony. I never met him personally (he was before my time). He passed away several years ago and generously remembered Il Cenacolo, USF and the Italian Community Services agency in his will. Our Holiday Gala usually doesn't generate enough revenue to cover costs; however, thanks to Tony's wish that we "have fun" with his bequest, we are able to continue this holiday party tradition. If other members are similarly inclined, perhaps they too could consider a gift to Il Cenacolo in their estate planning. My understanding is that this would just require a simple codicil to their existing wills and that legal fees associated with such a modification would be minimal (and even possibly covered by Il Cenacolo).

Just a reminder that you are invited to attend and observe a Board meeting. If you would like to come, please email me (ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org) and let me know your preferred date. We usually meet at 9:30 am on the second Thursday of each month—immediately before the weekly luncheon meeting.

FINALLY—

Rocco Gulli's passing reaffirms that we should enjoy this life as much as we can—which is what I believe Rocco did. May 2018 provide you and yours every opportunity to live your dreams and to enjoy friends and family.

Franz Cristiani
President

"May the sun shine on your window pane, always." —Rocco

IL CENACOLO TEAMS

FINANCE/INVESTMENTS

CHAIRMAN: Marv Pheffer (m.pheffer@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: John Benson, Ron Derenzi and David Giannini

FUNDRAISING

CHAIRMAN: Stuart Hume (s.hume@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Michael Muscardini and John Shook

HOLIDAY GALA

CHAIRMAN: Ron Derenzi (r.derenzi@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Eugene Lanzone and West Whittaker

ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL

CHAIRMAN: Ken Sproul (k.sproul@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBER: Lido Cantarutti

LUNCHEONS/SFIAC LIAISON

CHAIRMAN: Eugene Lanzone (e.lanzone@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Ken Sproul and Lou Sarto

OPERA OUTING

CHAIRMAN: Chuck Stagliano (c.stagliano@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Ron Derenzi, Don Lewis and Richard Ruff

PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN: Alex Kugushev (a.kugushev@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: David Cobb, Bill Dito and Mauro Zanetti

STRATEGIC PLANNING/MARKETING

CHAIRMAN: Richard DeBono (r.debono@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Jim Boitano, Pietro Bonanno and Mike Prior

WEBSITE REDESIGN

CHAIRMAN: Doug Von Qualen (d.vonqualen@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBER: Chuck Stagliano

RIDE SHARE

FROM:

CONTACT:

SF—Pacific Heights and the Marina . . . [Richard DeBono](#) 415-730-2584 cell

SF—Marina [David T. Giannini](#) 415-921-4407 home
415-713-9219 cell

SF—Jordan Park, Inner Richmond . . . [Chuck Stagliano](#) 415 531-6900 cell

Marin County [David Cobb](#) 707-888-2311 cell

SFIAC PARKING

(all within 1-4 blocks away)

- Valet parking at [Original Joe's](#) restaurant at the corner of Stockton and Union. You do not have to dine there to use the valet. The current charge is \$20.
- [APM Parking at 721 Filbert](#). \$10 with SFIAC validation.
- [North Beach Garage at 735 Vallejo](#) (between Stockton and Powell). \$4 per hour.
- [Vallejo Street Garage at 766 Vallejo](#). \$4 per hour.
- [Green Street Parking at 626 Green](#) (between Columbus and Powell). \$10.
- [Powell Street Garage at 1636 Powell](#) (between Union and Green). \$12-\$25.

(Click on links for directions to SFIAC)

LA FESTA DELLA BEFANA

Italy, like other Western European societies, observes the Feast of the Epiphany—Epifania in Italian—on January 6th in a special way. According to Christian tradition, this feast celebrates the arrival of the Three Magi at the stable in Bethlehem to offer newly born Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is the first “manifestation” (epiphany in Greek means “manifestation”) of Jesus as man and God to non-Jewish people. The occasion is an extremely important part of the Christmas festivities, and, as the 12th day of Christmas, concludes the Christmas-season celebration. In this month’s essay I want to make a change to the usual subject matter of these essays and write about an aspect of the Christmas season that is important to Italian culture. Since you will be receiving the January bulletin during the current holidays, I thought it would be interesting to describe this important festival that closes the Christmas season.

The FESTA DELLA BEFANA (“Festival of Befana”) for some Italian families is even more important than Christmas itself and is a big day for celebrating and exchanging presents. But Santa doesn’t bring these presents; they’re brought by a witch called Befana who flies in on a broomstick! So just what is the legend of Befana?

In popular folklore, Befana visits all the children of Italy on the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, January 5th, to fill their socks, or even their shoes, with *caramella* (“candy” or “caramel”) or fruit and presents if they are good; a lump of coal, or perhaps even onions or garlic, will be left if they are bad. (In many poorer parts of Italy and, in particular, rural Sicily, a stick was placed in a stocking instead of coal). Today, the coal tends to be rock candy called *carbone* (“coal”) made black with caramel coloring. And, in a change from the past, most Italian children now additionally get a piece of rock candy “carbone” since no child has been perfect over the whole year!



Befana is usually portrayed as a hag riding her broomstick through the air wearing a black shawl and covered in soot because she enters the children’s houses through the chimney (in modern apartments that lack a chimney, she enters through a keyhole). She is often smiling and carries her bag or hamper filled with the prizes she will leave. Being a good housekeeper, many say she will even sweep the floor before she leaves. To some, the sweeping symbolizes the sweeping away of the problems of the year. The family typically leaves a small glass of wine and a plate with a few morsels of regional or local food, which needs to be soft because Befana has hardly any teeth. Children even write short notes to Befana in hopes of winning her favorable judgment on their behavior.

Traditionally this was the feast that children waited for throughout the year, before *Babbo Natale* (“Santa Claus”) was known in Italy. (The legend of Santa Claus has only existed throughout Italy since World War II). Befana, the bony, ragged old lady, was much nearer in spirit to the poverty of Jesus and closer to the poverty experienced by most Italians over the centuries. She was traditionally the only gift-giver for children at this time of year. The gifts she delivered were reminders of the gifts that on Epiphany the Magi following the star had offered to baby Jesus, born in a poor manger in Bethlehem.



The legend of Befana has two basic sources:

1) the many pagan and folk traditions, predating the Christian, that were connected to the New Year and to the twelve days following the winter solstice; and 2) the Christian tradition. Over the centuries, these two came to be combined into the Festival of Befana.

THE PRE-CHRISTIAN PAGAN AND FOLK TRADITIONS

One pagan legend takes its origin from the effigy of the “old lady” that was burned in town squares to celebrate the end of the year, a symbol of the cycles of time that always end and begin anew. The Befana was also related to the mysterious rites of the Celtic peoples who once inhabited the whole *Pianura Padana* (“Po River Valley”) and part of the Alps, when wicker puppets were set on fire in honor of ancient gods. The witch, or the woman magician, (the priestess of the ancient Celtic culture who knew the secrets of nature) took on the form of the Befana. The “coal” that she would leave to the nasty children was actually also a symbol of fertility connected to the sacred bonfires and the *ceppo* (“tree stump”) used in Celtic rituals. The other almost universal symbol accompanying the old lady, the broom, which clearly resembles a magic wand, was also connected to the tree and the nature rituals of the Celts in their forests.



Another pagan source of the legend is in the pre-Christian calendar solstice rites that were used to celebrate the yearly cycle of the sun, and were slowly merged with the cycle of the life of the human being and the generations, each following one another. This eternal cycle was represented by symbols to exorcise anxiety about death.

In European folk traditions, the twelve days between Christmas and the Epiphany were the period in the year when the presence of witches was most felt. Especially on the 12th night (*see Shakespeare*), the night of the Epiphany, which was considered one of the most magical nights of the year. And Befana with her broken shoes actually flies on a broom, another important magic symbol in a number of European folk cultures. The Epiphany, the last festivity of the Christmas season, is considered a celebration of renewal, announcing the coming of the new season. In the peasant culture, this was the time when forecasts and predictions about the future were made by interpreting natural phenomena, and people sat around the fireplace or open fire telling fantastic tales.

THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

One Christian legend has it that the Magi stopped to ask Befana for directions to Bethlehem, but she didn't know what to tell them. So, she offered to put them up for the night since her house was the best-kept one in town. The Magi invited Befana to travel with them, but she said she had too much housework to do. However, after they left, Befana kept thinking about the invitation, and eventually she decided to follow the Magi to find Jesus. She carried a sack filled with bread and whenever she saw a child, she gave the child a piece of bread hoping that he might be Jesus. Sadly, though, Befana never managed to catch up with the Magi, and she never found the stable in Bethlehem. So, she continues to wander throughout Italy on her broomstick looking for the baby Jesus and leaving goodies for the children she sees.



Another Christian legend of Befana is similar to this first one. Its story begins at the time of the birth of Jesus. Befana spent her days cleaning and sweeping. One day the Magi came to her door in search of baby Jesus. Befana turned them away because she was too busy cleaning. However, later she noticed a bright light in the sky and she thought this pointed the way to baby Jesus. She brought some baked goods and gifts for the baby in her bag and took her broom to help his new mother clean. Thus, she began her search for baby Jesus. She searched but never found him, and so she continues her search today, after all these centuries. On the eve of the Epiphany, Befana comes to a house where there is a child and leaves a gift. Although she has been unsuccessful in her search, she still leaves gifts for good young children because Jesus can be found in all children.

A third Christian legend takes a slightly darker tone. Befana was an ordinary woman with a child whom she greatly loved. However, her child died, and her resulting grief maddened her. Upon hearing news of Jesus being born, she set out to see him, delusional that he was her son. She eventually met Jesus and presented him with gifts to make him happy. The infant Jesus was delighted, and he gave Befana a gift in return; she would be the mother of every child in Italy. Thus, she travels the whole of Italy rewarding or admonishing her "children."

THE CELEBRATION OF LA FESTA DELLA BEFANA TODAY

Besides the giving of candy and presents, today the Festa is celebrated in different ways throughout Italy. January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, is a national holiday in Italy, and Befana has become a national icon.

In central Rome, the Piazza Navona is the site of a popular market each year between Christmas and the Epiphany, where toys, sugar carbone, and other candies are sold. Romans believe that at midnight on the morning of January 6, the Befana shows herself from a window of Piazza Navona, and people always go there to watch her on their way to the festival to buy candies, toys and sweets.



In the regions of Marche, Umbria, and Latium, Befana's figure is associated with the Papal States, where the religious feast of the Epiphany held the most importance while these regions were under Papal control until the *Risorgimento*. Thus, the religious aspect of the Befana legend took primacy here for centuries. The town of Urbania, in the region of Marche, is considered Befana's official home. January 2-6 every year, the national Befana Festival is held here to celebrate the holiday. About 30,000 to 50,000 people attend the festivities each year. Hundreds of *Befane* are present, swinging from the main tower. They juggle, dance and greet all the children. A "house of the Befana" is built and the post office has a mailbox reserved for letters addressed to the Befana, mirroring what happens with Santa Claus in places where that legend is celebrated.



In the Veneto region, *roghi* ("wood bonfires") are lit on the night of the January 5th to predict the future by observing the direction of the smoke. Florence and other cities have large parades, usually led by three men dressed as the Magi on horseback.

In Venice, the *Regata delle Befane*, ("regatta of the witches") takes place on the Grand Canal. Retired gondoliers and members of various rowing clubs are dressed as old *Befane*, or *vecie maranteghe* in the Venetian dialect, and race from San Tomá to the Rialto Bridge, from which a large stocking is hung. Crowds of spectators fill the bridge and line the sides of the Canal, cheering on their favorite "Befana" while a band plays at the bridge to add to the joyous excitement of the festivities. And as with all Venetian regattas, the winners are awarded silk pennants at the finish line.



There are numerous poems about Befana, which are known in slightly different versions throughout Italy. Here is one of the most famous versions in Italian and English.

*La Befana vien di notte
con le scarpe tutte rotte
col vestito alla "romana"
viva viva la Befana!!
Porta cenere e carboni
ai bambini cattivoni
ai bambini belli e buoni
porta chicchi e tanti doni!*

*The Befana comes by night
With her shoes all broken
With a dress in Roman style
Up, up with the Befana!!
She brings ashes and coal
To bad nasty children
To the nice good child
She brings candies and many gifts!*

I hope you have enjoyed this look at an ancient Italian festival celebrated every January. The combination of pre-Christian pagan and Christian traditions into the story of Befana shows the conservation of the ancient with the modern. The Festa della Befana has given Italians in different regions and towns throughout the Italian peninsula, and in other countries to which Italians emigrated, a common cultural bond joining them together in celebration of this aspect of Italian culture.

N.B. The Leonardo da Vinci Society of San Francisco and the Museo Italo Americano are celebrating La Festa della Befana on Saturday, January 6, 2018 at 4:00 pm at the Museo. For information, please use the following link: <https://fortmason.org/event/festa-della-befana/>

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from: "Celebrating La Festa della Befana and Epiphany on January 6th" on Dream Discover Italia website, posted January 6, 2015; "The Befana" on Italy Heritage website; "Italian Christmas tradition of 'La Befana' " on Italian-Link website; "Introducing La Befana: An Italian Christmas Tradition," Walks of Italy website; "Italian Christmas Traditions: The Legend of La Befana" on One Day in Italy website; and Wikipedia.

To all of you, I wish a heartfelt: Felice Anno Nuovo!!

